

SNAPping into Action: State Nutrition Action Plans at Work

Wrap Up: Vision for the Future

Monday, September 12, 3:30-5:00 PM

- This nutrition education conference focuses on establishing connections-connections between people, programs, science and community.
- Our aim is to make nutrition education provided through the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) nutrition assistance programs more deliberate, collaborative and integrated. SNAP is one of several activities FNS has undertaken to achieve this.
- Many FNS program participants receive or are eligible to receive benefits from multiple FNS programs. For instance, a mother may participate in WIC, receive food stamps, and have older children that receive free lunch and breakfast. Ideally, our programs will operate together to form a package of nutrition services for this family. Just as the food benefits come together to meet a family's need for food support, so should the nutrition education provided in each program compliment the skills, knowledge and behaviors taught in the others.
- Our task is not easy. Today, Americans are flooded with competing messages and environmental settings that promote sedentary activity and high fat, high sugar foods. The food industry alone spends billions of dollars each year on food advertising. In contrast, all of FNS' nutrition assistance programs combined receive approximately \$600 million for nutrition education.
- Nutrition education that is linked across programs maximizes our resources and increases the strength and impact of our messages. A nutrition education initiative targeting pre-school children is more likely to reach children, their families, and their community, with sufficient frequency and intensity when it is coordinated and integrated among the WIC, Food Stamp, Child Nutrition, and Commodity Food Programs.
- Today, many experts believe that it is important to address not only the individual, family and community, but also the social and physical environment as well as policy issues. We acknowledge that our programs have limitations regarding what work on policy and environmental issues is allowed. Nonetheless, there is a lot that we can do.
- What is clear, however, is that no single program has the resources to support the type of ongoing and comprehensive interventions required to make behavior change a reality. We must engage in effective collaborations at all levels to be successful. It is for these reasons, that FNS is committed to furthering the SNAP effort and building stronger linkages between FNS programs to achieve the behavior outcomes that are needed.

- Cross-program collaboration at State and community levels includes working together, especially with other FNS programs, toward a common goal to reinforce and amplify each other's efforts. Collaborative projects necessitate commitments of staff support and time, as well as cost sharing among all involved entities. State Nutrition Action Plans provide us with a unique opportunity to work together, create synergy, and get results.
- FNS' commitment to cross-program collaboration and SNAP is evident in our current Program policies and standard operating procedures. For instance, current guidance includes encouragement to work with other FNS programs. To ensure common understanding, we have developed and disseminated cross program policies on physical activity promotion and the use of incentives. In addition, the new Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) Guiding Principles emphasize the importance of collaboration among stakeholders at the local, State, regional and national levels. States are also asked to include information on their collaborative efforts in their annual Food Stamp Nutrition Education Plan. To solidify the existing commitment to collaboration across programs, we plan to issue one overarching policy document for FNS nutrition assistance programs regarding collaboration in 2006.
- We are also looking at whether we can maximize our national impact by focusing on a small set of key behavioral outcomes across programs. While all of the recommendations in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans are important, some dietary behaviors may have greater potential to reduce the risk of diet-related diseases in the FNS target population. Would focusing our efforts and resources on this set of key behaviors yield the overall greatest impact? We ask that you consider this question in your State group at tomorrow's Networking Breakfast.
- We recognize that we have more work to do in easing program restrictions that impede or at least appear to impede an integrated approach to nutrition education delivery. This work includes seeking additional funding for cross-program initiatives, finding ways to allow for greater flexibility in program regulations in order to facilitate cross-program interventions, and applying current policy in a uniform way across our programs and in all of our regions.
- Since the 2003 Nutrition Conference, many of you have taken those difficult first steps towards strengthening relationships and identifying common goals. We are counting on you to help continue this momentum.
- Today, you've heard what some States are doing to develop and implement their SNAPs. Through this sharing of experiences, we hope that you've gotten some ideas of how to assist and strengthen your States' SNAP efforts and renewed your determination to persist and stay on course.
- At the Networking Breakfast tomorrow morning, you will have the opportunity to work "hands-on" with Program representatives from your State. You'll have the chance to review your experiences and reflect on current goals and strategies. State

groups will also discuss key behavioral outcomes that can be addressed across FNS programs. Whether your State already has many cross-program efforts underway, or is still working to formulate a SNAP plan, I hope this Breakfast will energize and inspire you.

- To continue this sharing process, I encourage all of you to share your achievements via the SNAP web site. There are successes and lessons learned that occur throughout the SNAP process. Each step is important. If your State has recently overcome barriers and you are now having your first meetings to discuss SNAP objectives--that is an accomplishment that other States just starting out may learn from.
- Our Regional FNS offices are available to work with States in the development of their SNAP. To support State SNAP efforts, we will be holding cross-program nutrition education meetings in each FNS Region over the next few years.
- Once you return to your States, we encourage you to continue work on your SNAP. Build on the ideas that surface during this conference, continue the dialogue with your State SNAP team, meet regularly, implement activities according to your timeline, and refine objectives and tactics. Continue to update and expand your SNAP by involving new partners that share our goal.
- We thank you for the hard work that you've done since the last conference and your dedication.
- Our vision for the future is that cross-program collaboration among our programs will be a standard operating procedure and SNAP a routine process. That FNS programs will work in concert to deliver consistent nutrition education messages through all program channels to reach America's children and low-income households and communities.
- SNAP is a new process to facilitate collaboration and work toward a shared vision. A vision of improved nutrition among children and low-income Americans. Working together, we can achieve this vision and make a difference in your State and across America. Thank you!